DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 765 JC 000 288

AUTHOR	Cook, Amy
TITLE	Community College Baccalaureate Degrees: A Delivery Model for the Future? Policy Paper.
INSTITUTION	Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO. Center for Community College Policy.
SPONS AGENCY	Amoco Foundation, Inc., Chicago, IL.
REPORT NO	CC-00-3
PUB DATE	2000-02-00
NOTE	9p.; For other policy papers in this series, see JC 000 287-296.
AVAILABLE FROM	ECS Distribution Center, 707 17th St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427 ($4). Tel: 303-299-3692. For full text: http://www.communitycollegepolicy.org/html/publications.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bachelors Degrees; College Graduates; *Community Colleges; Educational Planning; *Educational Policy; Higher Education; *Institutional Mission; *Labor Force Development; Policy Formation; Population Growth; Technical Occupations

ABSTRACT

This paper, which focuses on community college baccalaureate degrees, is part of a series published by the Center for Community College Policy, designed to support state and local policymakers, as well as educational leaders who are interested in policy issues related to the two-year postsecondary sector. Changing demographics, fiscal concerns, and community expectations, are exerting pressure to add the granting of four-year degrees to the traditional mission of the community college. Arguments for increasing access to baccalaureate degrees include new demands for technological skills, the large sizes of future graduating high school classes, geographical access, the flexibility of community colleges, and the increasing number of occupations now requiring a degree beyond the associate level. The concern of community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees challenges their traditional role and may cause costs to rise, diverting resources from populations that historically only community colleges have served. Some states, such as Florida, are already considering offering baccalaureate degrees while other states have developed collaborative models between two-year and four-year institutions. Policymakers must consider not only student and community needs, but also cost, structure, and institutional mission in order to make an informed decision. (AF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

POLICY Paper

February 2000

COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE DEGREES: A DELIVERY MODEL FOR THE FUTURE?

by Amy Cook

ED 439 765

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC 000 288

Introduction

Community colleges traditionally offer postsecondary programs that are two years or less in duration, including the freshman and sophomore years of a bachelor's degree, specialized vocational-technical programs, remedial education and community service education. But changing demographics, economic concerns, and community and business expectations are now exerting pressure in some locations and in some fields to add an additional mission to traditional community college roles — the granting of full four-year baccalaureate degrees.

Some people believe the need for new and different types of baccalaureate education, such as technical degree programs, will outpace traditional four-year colleges and universities' capacity to provide it. The burgeoning number of high school graduates (the graduating class of 2008 is expected to be the largest in history), the continuing rise in the number of place-bound adults returning to continue their education and the increasing number of jobs requiring training beyond an associate's degree also are contributing to the increased demand for a baccalaureate degree. According to some policymakers and college presidents, the community college, with its convenient location, historically low costs, flexibility and history of meeting community needs, is an obvious alternative for meeting these demands.

But the notion of a community college offering its own bachelor's degrees seriously challenges traditional definitions of the community college role. In fact, most states legislatively prohibit community colleges from offering baccalaureate degrees. Additionally, some community college leaders argue that the costs and perceived prestige of the baccalaureate could threaten important community college values, raise institutional costs and divert resources from populations that only community colleges are charged to serve. If community colleges are to provide baccalaureate education, more than a simple change in legislation is needed. Education leaders and policymakers must examine closely the impact such a change will have on meeting student and community needs, costs, state postsecondary education structure and institutional mission.

inside...

3 Current Approaches To Increase Access to Baccalaureate Degrees

5 Policy Considerations Related to a Community College Baccalaureate

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Background

The factors that once led to many junior colleges being redesignated as baccalaureate institutions — enrollment growth, increased demand for baccalaureate degrees and the prestige of having a four-year institution in the community — are still relevant today. But, as Ken Walker, a Florida community college president, says, several new concerns have caused education leaders and policymakers to look to community colleges in their search for alternative education delivery models. Those concerns include the following:

- Increasing geographical and financial access to baccalaureate education
- Expanding opportunities for flexible, low-cost, job-related baccalaureate degrees
- Strengthening postsecondary commitment to economic development regarding specific needs of local/state business and industry.

Consequently, states such as Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Nevada and Utah have considered allowing community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees, prompting heated debates about community college missions, the essential meaning of a bachelor's degree and the ability of postsecondary education to respond to state education and economic needs.

Florida Community Colleges May Offer Baccalaureate

During 1999, in an effort to increase student access to advanced courses without building new campuses, the Florida Legislature unanimously passed a bill allowing the state's two-year colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees under certain conditions. Under the new bill, the legislature agreed to finance joint efforts by community colleges and four-year institutions to offer baccalaureate degrees on community college campuses.

Although the state's 28 public community colleges continue to be precluded from offering baccalaureate degrees on their own, the law outlines a process in which community colleges can seek legislative permission to offer their own programs if no four-year public or private universities in the state are willing to form partnerships. Before such permission can be granted, however, the state's Postsecondary Education Planning Commission must certify that there is a clear need for any proposed baccalaureate program on a community college campus.

Source: Schmidt, Peter (1999, July 2). "Florida's 2-Year Colleges Allowed to Offer B.A.'s," The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Amy Cook is a former ECS research associate.

Current Approaches To Increase Access to Baccalaureate Degrees

The need for increased access to postsecondary education is central to the discussion of community college baccalaureate degrees. Equally important are demands for new technical degrees not offered by four-year universities. While the community college baccalaureate may be a viable option, states already have adopted a variety of other education delivery models to meet changing expectations.

In fact, the demand for the availability of baccalaureate education on community college campuses is not new. Many community and technical colleges already collaborate with four-year institutions to set up local university centers, branch campuses, inter-institutional consortia, two-plus-two partnerships, distance education programs and other services. These programs provide four-year degree training that is housed and/or supported by a community college but remains under the academic, administrative and legal control of the four-year institutions that actually grant the degrees. As with the community college baccalaureate degree, however, questions of student and community need, cost, organizational structure and institutional mission need to be considered for each model. Not surprisingly, a successful approach in one state or community may not translate well in another.

Collaborative Models Between Two-Year Colleges and Four-Year Institutions

- University Center Model (North Harris Montgomery Community College District, Texas, and Macomb Community College, Michigan) A community college partners with four-year universities or colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees on the community college campus. The university center is usually staffed by four-year and some two-year faculty and is governed by the university.
- Multi-Institutional Consortium Model (Auraria Higher Education Center, Colorado) Two- and four-year systems locate on the same campus. Though each has separate curricula, faculty and administrations, the institutions work together to serve students and use facilities and other resources in more efficient ways.
- Two-plus-two Partnership Model (Northern Arizona University/Arizona Western College Partnership) Similar to but smaller than the multi-institutional consortia, the two-plus-two model strives to create a more seamless transition between the student's first two years of community college and a four-year campus.
- Distance Education Model (Colorado Electronic Community College, Western Governors University) Tapping into technological advances such as the Internet, the World Wide Web, interactive video and educational television, distance education programs serve as "at-will" education systems. Students can learn what they want, when they want, where they want and how they want it.

Community College Baccalaureate Degree

Unlike the redesignation of a junior college as a four-year institution, the community college baccalaureate implies that the degree-granting institution maintains its community college identity. This new type of baccalaureate degree would be granted by the community college, with classes taught by community college faculty. This arrangement is contrary to other models such as university centers that award degrees from four-year universities located on two-year campuses.

Proponents frequently describe the community college baccalaureate degree as an expanded version of the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree, an applied baccalaureate that offers specialized, technical training for students in areas such as computer network management or mortuary sciences. While some community college baccalaureate programs would be similar to a traditional bachelor's degree, some schools have advocated an alternative curriculum approach.

The inverted curriculum model would allow the student to build upon the technical, applied training received during the associate's degree with two more years of general core curriculum and advanced technical coursework. Some proponents view this approach as a natural progression of the community college framework, with the focus first on technical education and then on the general core to complete the four-year degree. Consequently, proponents see this model as more user-friendly, especially for adult students who receive career training up-front in their education. Others, however, have questioned its effectiveness in teaching general education classes and specific critical-thinking skills.

Nonetheless, some states already have begun grappling with the realities of the community college or applied baccalaureate. In the mid-1990s, Utah Valley State College (formerly Utah Valley Community College) began offering a variety of baccalaureate degrees in areas such as computer science and business and is being pressured by students and others to expand even further. In Arizona, policymakers and education leaders have developed a system to allow community colleges to offer a baccalaureate degree only after a thorough needs assessment and after the university system has had the opportunity to do so first.

Responding to Industry Needs

In 1997, Arkansas' Westark Community College became the first community college in the nation granted legislative permission to offer a baccalaureate degree on its campus. The legislation established Westark as a "pilot" project, allowing the college to offer up to nine select baccalaureate degrees.

Before Westark could offer a degree program in one of the nine areas, it was required to demonstrate that there was an industry need and that students in the program would complete their degree in fewer than four years. In fall 1998, the college began offering a three-year program leading to a Bachelor's of Manufacturing Technology. The time needed for attaining an applied baccalaureate education is shortened because the program is designed for employed students who already understand their specific training needs. Rather than be issued grades, the baccalaureate student at Westark is required to master 67 core competency modules and participate in a "capstone experience," which is similar to completing a student portfolio.

Policy Implications and Key Questions

What is certain is that as policymakers, students and employers continue to demand more from their postsecondary education system, they will look to community colleges to help meet their expectations. Yet consideration of the community college baccalaureate degree versus other alternatives raises a number of important policy issues. Several such issues are highlighted briefly below.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO A COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE

- Institutional Mission
- Student and Community Need
- Cost
- Structure

- **Institutional Mission** — The community college serves five primary functions — transferring students to four-year colleges, providing technical and occupational education, offering remedial education, providing training for business and industry, and filling community service needs. Many believe it is a logical extension of the "comprehensive" mission of community colleges to award baccalaureate degrees.

  The community college baccalaureate raises concerns, however, about the community college's ability to maintain its core two-year focus. "Mission creep," or the shift from the community college's original functions to a concentration on baccalaureate education, could leave a gap on the postsecondary landscape. Influenced by perceptions of prestige or the realities of limited funding, a community college, for instance, could change its emphasis from remedial to baccalaureate education. Such changes then would affect the community college culture, causing divisions among upper- and lower-division faculty on issues of workload, pay or emphasis on academic research versus applied and technical learning.

  Shifts such as these also could have a dramatic, if not negative, impact on state goals such as increasing postsecondary access for underserved populations or improving educational opportunities for welfare recipients. Policymakers examining institutional mission should consider the following questions:

  - Where does the baccalaureate fit within the priority list of public or student interests to be served by the community college?
  - Will something have to give in order to maintain the necessary level of resources, quality and services?

- **Student and Community Need** — Community colleges often serve as the only postsecondary education provider in a particular geographic area. Consequently, they can be an important resource for place-bound students seeking access to baccalaureate education. As with programs such as university centers or two-plus-two partnerships, the community college baccalaureate is another way for the colleges to respond to local needs. By providing advanced training requested by local businesses and employees, the community college also can help build the community's economic capacity.

  The community college baccalaureate degree, however, relies on the assumption that the need exists for such a program. Distinguishing between anecdotal evidence and a

documented need for change requires a clear understanding of how current education needs have been met and where the gaps, if any, are. A tough-minded assessment of the need for and impact of this degree requires careful consideration of several questions:

- Whose needs are being served by a community college baccalaureate?
- Is the need for increased baccalaureate access, for particular degree areas or for advanced workplace training?
- Are those needs significant enough to warrant new responses? Can they be addressed through alternatives other than the baccalaureate?
- Which of the goals reflect public interest, which reflect institutional interests, and how do they relate to overall state needs?

• **Cost** — Faced with rising enrollments and limited resources, states are looking for effective, efficient and accountable ways to provide quality education to the public, and advocates argue that a community college baccalaureate degree has the potential to lower the overall costs of delivering baccalaureate education. By using existing resources, faculty, support services and facilities to expand AAS degrees to the bachelor level, the community college baccalaureate ultimately could save tax dollars.

It is shortsighted, however, to assume that an institution simply can convert to a baccalaureate mode without incurring significant costs. Changed accreditation expectations could affect primary cost drivers such as faculty and libraries. Upgrading laboratories and equipment to meet baccalaureate institutional needs also could require substantial investments. Lastly, faculty salary and workload issues are inevitable.

While the costs associated with converting curriculum, faculty salaries or libraries are often immediate concerns, larger policy questions also need to be addressed. These include:

- Are the community colleges capable of developing a cost model for offering bachelor degrees that differs markedly from the traditional cost model in four-year colleges and universities? (Generally, university faculty have higher salaries and a different workload than their community college peers. Additionally, taxpayers often pay a larger proportion of the total cost for a baccalaureate education. For instance, in Florida, community college students pay an estimated 27% of the $1,200 tuition and fees, while university students pay an estimated 18% of the $2,600 tuition and fees.)
- How will the community college baccalaureate model affect institutional competition for enrollment and fixed state resources?

- **Structure** — Many postsecondary education structures in the states have been based on the distinction between offering two- or four-year degrees. The community college baccalaureate blurs the lines around those differences, potentially requiring changes in state laws, governance, program approval, funding formulas and financial aid. Some basic questions in this area include:

  - If a state has both a community college and four-year institutional board, who should have primary decisionmaking responsibility on issues of program approval, funding or financial aid for community college baccalaureate programs?
  - Are the program approval guidelines sufficient to determine the need, structure and requirements for this new degree?
  - Should state or system funding formulas be changed to fund a new degree structure adequately, and, if so, how?
  - Should current financial aid policies be adapted to address a new class of student?

While the community college baccalaureate degree clearly has implications for state postsecondary policies, it also affects institutional structures. Administrative procedures, admissions policies, salary schedules and funding decisions may need to evolve to adapt to the community college baccalaureate.

Conclusion

It has become clear that improving the accessibility and applicability of advanced knowledge and training is critical to the future of the United States. Students and businesses are demanding new postsecondary opportunities, and states play a key role in structuring the policies to make it happen.

Attracting almost one-half of all postsecondary students, community colleges are crucial in providing access to higher education. As institutions accustomed to responding to new demands, community colleges quickly can adapt to the evolving postsecondary market. The community college baccalaureate degree may serve as another innovative example of community college responsiveness.

Yet as state policymakers compare the community college baccalaureate model to others, including the university center, multi-institutional consortium and two-plus-two programs, they need to weigh the impact each will have on state, system and institutional goals. By addressing issues such as student and community need, costs, structure, and institutional mission and focus, policymakers can make informed decisions that help meet the needs of the public and the future.

VII. Resources

- Arizona Community College Board
  Donald Puyear
  3225 North Central Avenue
  Century Plaza, Suite 1220
  Phoenix, AZ 85012
  602-255-4037

- Auraria Higher Education Center
  Dean Wolf, Executive Vice President
  Rosemary Fetter, Public Information Director
  Office of the EVPA
  Campus Box A
  PO Box 173361
  Denver, CO 80217-3361
  303-556-3291

- Colorado Electronic Community College
  Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System
  Bill Richards, President
  1391 North Speer Boulevard, Suite 600
  Denver, CO 80204-2554
  303-620-4000

- Florida Community College System
  David Armstrong, Executive Director
  1314 Florida Education Center
  325 West Gaines Street
  Tallahassee, FL 32399-0900
  904-488-1721

- Macomb Community College
  Albert Lorenzo, President
  14500 Twelve Mile Road
  Warren, MI 48093
  810-445-7000

- North Harris Montgomery Community College District
  John Pickelman, Chancellor
  250 N. Sam Houston Pkwy East
  Houston, TX 77060-2000
  281-260-3500

- Northern Arizona University/Arizona Western College Partnership
  Clara Lovett, NAU President
  Flagstaff, AZ 86011-0001
  520-523-9011

  Don Schoening,
  Arizona Western President
  P.O. Box 929
  Yuma, AZ 85366-0929
  520-726-1000

- Utah Valley State College
  Kerry Romesburg, President
  800 W. 1200 South
  Orem, UT 84058-5999
  801-222-8000

- Western Governors University
  Amy Carmer, Manager of Public Policy
  305 West, North Temple,
  FourTriad, Suite 850
  Salt Lake City, UT 84180
  801-575-5358

© Copyright 2000 by the Education Commission of the States (ECS). All rights reserved.

The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide interstate compact formed in 1965 to help governors, state legislators, state education officials and others develop policies to improve the quality of education.

It is ECS policy to take affirmative action to prevent discrimination in its policies, programs and employment practices.

ECS is pleased to have other organizations or individuals share its materials with their constituents. To request permission to excerpt part of this publication either in print or electronically, please write or fax Josie Canales, Education Commission of the States, 707 17th St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427; fax: 303-296-8332.

Copies of this paper are available for $4 plus postage and handling from the ECS Distribution Center, 707 17th St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427; 303-299-3692; fax: 303-296-8332; or jvey@ecs.org. Ask for No. CC-00-3. ECS accepts prepaid orders, MasterCard, American Express and Visa. All sales are final.

Generous discounts are available for bulk orders of single publications. They are: 10-24 copies, 10% discount; 25-49 copies, 20% discount; 50-74 copies, 30% discount; 75-99 copies, 40% discount; and 100+ copies, 50% discount.

Postage and handling:

If your order totals: Up to $10.00, add $3.00 postage and handling; $10.01-$25.00, $4.25; $25.01-$50.00, $5.75; $50.01-$75.00, $8.50; $75.01-$100.00, $10.00; and over $100.00, $12.00.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE POLICY CENTER

This paper was produced by the Center for Community College Policy, with support from the Amoco Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the funders, and no endorsement by the federal government should be assumed.